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Chairman: Mr. Kiwanuka ..... (Uganda)
later: Mr. Lewis (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 84: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (*continued*) (A/55/13, A/55/329, A/55/391, A/55/402, A/55/425, A/55/428 and A/55/456)

1. **Mr. Pohan** (Indonesia) said that, regrettably, the debate on the item was taking place against a backdrop of increasing violence and tension in the occupied territories. His delegation appealed for the cessation of the excessive use of force against the unarmed civilian population and for an end to the exacerbation of the plight of Palestine refugees. The United Nations undoubtedly bore a historical and moral responsibility towards those refugees. By mandating the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to provide them with social and economic assistance, the Organization had played a crucial role in averting a historical catastrophe. He noted with satisfaction the endeavours of UNRWA in such areas as development of human resources, utilization of a unified registration system based on integrated computerized databases, implementation of a special hardship programme involving food support, shelter rehabilitation and poverty alleviation initiatives, granting of preferential access to its training centres, and implementation of social development programmes for youth, women and persons with disabilities. Those efforts deserved to be sustained, particularly in the light of the deteriorating situation in the Middle East. Settlement activities, closure of the territories, detentions, expropriation of Palestinian-owned lands and delays in releasing all Palestinian prisoners had serious social and economic repercussions, and not only for the region in question. Indonesia had always supported the cause of the Palestinian people and it had, within its modest means, provided assistance to it in its struggle for self-determination and statehood.

2. Although the funds provided to the Agency by donor countries had increased, that process had not kept pace with the growth of the refugee population, as a result of which cost reduction measures had been taken, affecting the refugees themselves. It was to be hoped that the donor countries would continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian people to meet its urgent and vital needs.

3. **Mr. Kasoulides** (Cyprus) said that his delegation wished to align itself with the statement made by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union, with which Cyprus was associated. The recent disturbing events in the region had created a very dangerous situation, and living conditions had worsened dramatically, particularly for Palestine refugees in Gaza and the West Bank. The inhabitants of the region had suffered greatly as a result of that continuing crisis, although mention must be made of the efforts of the international community, donor countries and especially the dedicated staff of UNRWA to alleviate the sufferings of Palestine refugees, who were in the most difficult position. Cyprus, which had close and friendly relations with the countries of the Middle East, attached great importance to the improvement of the economic and social conditions of the Palestinians and hoped for the achievement of lasting peace and security in the Middle East. Following the 1974 invasion, Cyprus itself had long received generous international aid to assist the displaced population and revitalize the devastated economy.

4. Regarding the activities of UNRWA, his delegation shared the concern of the Commissioner-General about the serious financial difficulties encountered by the Agency in carrying out its programmes, which were inevitably having an adverse impact on the level and quality of services. The slow and painful peace process had raised hope that the United Nations resolutions would be implemented in the near future. The events of the past few weeks had shaken those hopes, without breaking them. His delegation was convinced that the peace process would resume. In the current situation, the work of UNRWA was even more important. The Agency must be placed on a secure financial footing, and his delegation appealed for additional and increased contributions in order to alleviate the plight of the thousands of suffering Palestinians. Cyprus had developed its own assistance scheme, which included technical assistance programmes and training of Palestinian officials and civil servants in Cyprus, and it had recently dispatched medical supplies and medical personnel to the region.

5. **Mr. Osei** (Ghana) said that the problem of the refugees was deeply rooted in a political issue, and that it remained essential to settle that problem once and for all in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions. The current situation in the region required

the international community to continue its efforts at achieving a comprehensive settlement that would ensure a durable peace.

6. The report of the Working Group highlighted the precarious financial situation of the Agency and the negative effect of the budget shortfall of $61.4 million, which, regrettably, had led to the imposition of austerity measures, curtailing expansion of socio-economic programmes at a period of growth in the refugee population. In that connection, the strenuous efforts of the Commissioner-General to keep donors informed through regular consultations and the provision of quarterly financial reports were highly appreciated, as was the continuing effort to reform the financial and management system on the basis of current technology. In underscoring the obligation of the international community to reaffirm its commitment to the cause of Palestinian refugees through assistance to UNRWA, his delegation endorsed the appeal urging all Governments to make contributions to the Agency in a timely and generous manner in order to ensure that its services could continue and that services cut as a result of the austerity measures could be restored.

7. **Mr. Ahmad** (Malaysia) said that his country strongly condemned the provocative actions which had led to the critical situation in the very area where the Agency operated, and the continuing violence and excessive use of force which had resulted in the deaths of over one hundred people, many of whom were refugees. His country called on all parties, in particular Israel, to put a stop to those senseless deaths and suffering.

8. His delegation attached great importance to the work of UNRWA, and commended the Governments of such refugee host countries as Lebanon, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic for their support and assistance to Palestinian refugees. At the same time, it was concerned at the negative effects of the Agency's financial situation. It took note of the recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, commended the initiatives of the Commissioner-General in seeking increased contributions from traditional major donors, and shared the concern raised by the Commissioner-General that one of the major factors aggravating the financial situation of the Agency was the unpredictable performance of world currency markets. A budget cut of $10 million was substantial and affected the Agency's activities. His delegation expressed the hope that the international community would make contributions to the budget of the Agency so that UNRWA could continue to provide its vital services to Palestinian refugees.

9. **Mr. Al-Adsani** (Kuwait) thanked UNRWA and its Commissioner-General for the excellent report and the large amount of work they had accomplished. His delegation appealed for the continued provision of comprehensive assistance to refugees, despite all the difficulties facing the Agency, and for full implementation of the latter's mandate as stipulated in the General Assembly resolutions.

10. Kuwait had provided and continued to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees through the implementation of various projects, in particular in the area of infrastructure; its annual contribution amounted to about $5 million. Unfortunately, through its policy in the occupied Territories and its refusal to observe the relevant United Nations resolutions, Israel continued to violate the norms of international law and hindered the normal work of the Agency. As noted at the October summit conference of Arab States held in Cairo, peace in the Near East could be achieved only on the basis of the principles of equality and justice. Kuwait was prepared to continue contributing to UNRWA, so that the Agency could overcome its financial difficulties and continue to provide its necessary services to Palestinian refugees.

11. **Mr. Hodgkins** (United States of America) said that his country strongly supported the activities of UNRWA in providing assistance to Palestinian refugees, especially in the areas of health care and education, and believed that the Agency could overcome its current financial problems through reform efforts. However, his Government could not support an unbalanced resolution, since that would not facilitate the restoration of peace in the Near East, which could only be achieved on the basis of an agreement among the interested parties. The Committee needed to make every effort to encourage their aspirations for peace.

12. **Mr. Hawkins** (Australia) said that his country had long supported the Agency in its practical assistance to the problem of Palestinian refugees and was committed to supporting the Middle East peace process, as the visit of its Prime Minister, John Howard, to the West Bank and Gaza had shown. His Government was deeply concerned at the suffering

which had recently occurred in those territories and in Israel, and was providing emergency aid in the hope that it would help to end the violence and return the parties to the peace process.

13. **Mr. Karagoz** (Turkey) said that his delegation deplored the recent tragic events in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and stressed that a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East could only be achieved through dialogue and full compliance with the agreements already reached. The opportunity for continuing the peace process must not be missed, and Turkey was prepared to extend its utmost support in that respect.

14. At the core of the problem of Palestine was the fate of the Palestinian refugees, whose problems were currently predominantly humanitarian. Therefore, UNRWA performed an important function in providing services in the areas of education, health care and social protection. His delegation commended the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Mr. Hansen, for his tireless efforts, and the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, of which Turkey served as Chairman, for drawing attention to the Agency's difficult financial situation.

15. Referring to the reports of the Secretary-General, in particular on the University of Jerusalem "Al-Quds" for Palestinian refugees, he expressed his Government's wish to revitalize the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine and underlined Turkey's readiness to contribute actively to efforts to address the various aspects of the Palestinian problem in different forums.

16. **Mr. Nacerodien** (South Africa) said that UNRWA continued, as ever, to carry out its functions successfully, despite severe financial constraints, and to provide much needed assistance to Palestine refugees, thereby contributing to the maintenance of stability and the pursuit of peace. It was therefore disturbing to learn, from the report of the Commissioner-General of the Agency, of the imposition by Israel of further restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNRWA staff, which was obstructing their humanitarian activities, in contravention of the norms of international law relating to United Nations personnel. The Non-Aligned Movement had reiterated its support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State with its capital in East Jerusalem, and had called for the strict implementation of all United Nations resolutions concerning Palestine refugees. His delegation believed that the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence was crucial to the attainment of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. It was incumbent on the international community to make every effort to ensure respect for the norms of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territories until a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the problem of Palestine refugees was achieved on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

17. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the tragedy of the Palestinian people had already lasted for more than half a century and that, throughout that time, Israel had maintained its policy of ignoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian population. The recent tragic events in Jerusalem, in which many Palestinian martyrs had perished, were the latest manifestation of that policy. Paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) provided for the return of the refugees to their homes and the payment of compensation for their property. Since its adoption in 1948, the international community and, in particular, the General Assembly had repeatedly reaffirmed the inalienable right of Palestine refugees to return and to establish their own independent State. The continued disregard of the acute problem of Palestine refugees would in no way help to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East, yet successive Israeli Governments had not only failed to contribute to the solution of that problem, but had endeavoured to aggravate the situation still further by provoking the Palestinians, who were living in extremely difficult social and economic conditions.

18. He expressed appreciation for the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA; the Agency was doing important work in difficult circumstances to provide services to the many Palestine refugees. He was concerned about the financial situation of UNRWA, particularly its budget deficit, which had persisted and even increased at a time when the number of refugees requiring assistance was growing. That was taking place against the background of the developments in the peace process and after the holding of a number of major United Nations conferences, including the recent Millennium Summit, at which it had been emphasized that the international

community must show solidarity with Palestine refugees and provide them with assistance to alleviate their plight.

19. The Syrian Arab Republic was providing significant support to Palestine refugees through a whole range of projects, and its financial contribution to the development of health care, education and social services was noted in the relevant sections of the report of UNRWA. However, the task of providing assistance to the refugees was the responsibility of the entire international community, and his delegation called on donor countries to ensure that the Agency had the necessary level of resources to overcome its financial difficulties and discharge fully its mandate to provide services to Palestine refugees. His delegation hoped that the day would come when the international community could finally implement all General Assembly resolutions on that issue and allow Palestine refugees to return to their homes and to a peaceful existence. Israel, however, was demonstrating through its uncompromising policy and the intensification of repression against the Palestinians that it was not ready for the attainment of a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East leading to the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian population and, first and foremost, the right of the refugees to return to their homes.

20. **Mr. Naji Abiassi** (Lebanon) said that recent events had shown that partial, bilateral and temporary solutions would not serve their purpose without a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question in all its aspects. In order to ensure that such a settlement was lasting and reflected the interests of all parties, it must be based on the norms of international law and the relevant resolutions of the Madrid Conference and provide for the withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian territories. The Palestinian people must be given the opportunity to exercise its inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and to establish an independent State in its national territory with the capital in Jerusalem.

21. His delegation appreciated the efforts of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and the Agency's staff to implement its mandate. It was grateful to donor countries that had met the expenses incurred by UNRWA in providing for the basic needs of hundreds of thousands of refugees. The observance in 2000 of the fiftieth anniversary of the commencement of UNRWA activities was an appropriate moment to reaffirm the importance of the Agency's endeavours. His delegation wished to reiterate the need to find a just solution to the problem of Palestine refugees, particularly those in Lebanon. That solution must reaffirm their right to return to their homeland, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and the norms of international law. In that connection, Lebanon rejected for various reasons the establishment, in any form, of settlements for Palestine refugees in its territory. That was the principle on which all segments of Lebanese society had agreed after long and painful years of struggle. It was enshrined in the preamble to the Constitution of Lebanon and was an important element of the policy of national reconciliation in the country.

22. Lebanon had assumed a heavy burden by sheltering thousands of refugees in its territory and was providing significant support to the Palestinian people in their struggle. Lebanon could not, however, take responsibility for the permanent establishment of Palestine refugees in its territory. The Palestinians agreed with Lebanon and were refusing to settle permanently in Lebanon. They were firmly resolved to demand the realization of their lawful right to return to their own territory. The permanent establishment of Palestinians outside the framework envisaged in the peace plan could destabilize the situation and undermine peace and security in the Middle East.

23. His delegation wished to make a number of comments regarding the resolution of the Palestine refugee problem. Firstly, the Special Committee on Palestine (Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People) established as a result of the multilateral negotiations was not the appropriate mechanism for resolving the Palestinian problem, since its main mandate consisted of examining ways and means of improving the living conditions of the Palestinians. Lebanon would not participate in the work of that committee or other committees dealing with such problems until progress was made in the bilateral talks, which had currently been suspended owing to Israel's intransigence and its refusal to adopt a just and sound decision. Secondly, an agreement over a definitive settlement of the Palestine refugee problem could not be reached by the parties concerned without the agreement of host countries. His delegation was concerned that UNRWA should preserve its archives and documents relating to refugees and their families.

24. His delegation reiterated its willingness to cooperate with UNRWA in successfully implementing its mandate. The international community bore the main responsibility for creating appropriate living conditions for Palestinian refugees temporarily residing in host countries. UNRWA was undertaking efforts to that end. Meanwhile, his delegation urged the international community to assume responsibility for achieving the right of the Palestinian people to return to their territory. It was vital to study the highly dangerous consequences of the current situation which had arisen because Israel had closed the door on peace. Such a situation carried with it new dangers relating to immigration and a new outflow of people from Palestinian territories. The Lebanese delegation hoped that UNRWA would rise to the task before it.

25. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) expressed strong appreciation for the efforts undertaken by UNRWA to provide services to Palestinian refugees. The UNRWA budgetary deficit and the lack of available cash explained the current crisis. The lack of funding in recent years had diluted the Agency's efforts. UNRWA had made attempts to identify new methods of financing and to minimize the harmful impact of the current financial crisis on core programmes. The funding deficit must not be allowed to affect core programmes. However, it might not turn out to be such a serious cause for concern in the light of the Agency's activities over the past five decades, during which time it had surmounted all obstacles. Financial difficulties must not be allowed to prevent the Agency from fulfilling the noble objectives before it.

26. It was vital to urge payment of voluntary contributions. The financial resources allocated had permitted some improvement in the difficult financial position of UNRWA, but at the same time the total financial resources had decreased, a working capital deficit had been created and new requirements had emerged, with an overall negative effect on the completion of a number of projects. Moreover, there was now a structural deficit which prevented the Agency from taking the natural demographic increase in the refugee population into account when providing services.

27. His delegation expressed strong appreciation for the efforts of donors, particularly the major donors, which had always responded to calls for additional contributions. It was to be hoped that UNRWA would manage to acquire the additional resources it needed to fulfil its objectives without having to resort to economizing measures which would have a negative impact on the services rendered to Palestinian refugees.

28. Assistance to Palestinian refugees was an integral part of the Palestinian problem. That problem had political dimensions insofar as it should be approached not only from the point of view of the refugees, but also in a wider sense. The refusal to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions meant that the Agency was forced to continue to render basic services to the Palestinian refugees under short-term assistance projects as well as long-term programmes aimed at improving the social and economic situation of refugees in the region. The work of UNRWA would continue to be essential until solutions were found to the problem of Palestinian refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolutions and to the problem of the Middle East as a whole.

29. **Mr. Hossain** (Bangladesh) expressed concern over the continued funding shortfalls in UNRWA's regular budget. The cash-flow situation of the Agency was also a matter of concern. His delegation was appreciative of the US$ 12 million contributed by the United States, which would allow the Agency to meet its payroll. Since any shortfall in regular budget funding affected the well-being of the Palestinian refugees, his delegation urged the international community, particularly donors, to make funds available to the Agency to enable it to raise health and school education services to the desired levels, and to meet their obligations for the timely payment of pledged contributions.

30. His delegation greatly appreciated the role that UNRWA — despite its financial crisis — played in ensuring wide community participation in various activities, and asked it to put greater emphasis on human resource development. For its own part, Bangladesh was willing to share its experiences in the field of microcredit. It was a matter of concern that the Agency's operations during the reporting period had been interrupted on several occasions as a result of the security regime. So-called security needs should in no way compromise the well-being of the refugees, given that any reduction would have damaging consequences for the Palestinian refugees and would not serve the collective interests of the concerned parties in the region.

31. **Mr. Zohar** (Israel), having expressed appreciation to UNRWA for its good work, pointed out that the Agency's activities could not provide a definitive solution to the Arab refugee problem, for that must be determined through diplomatic negotiations between the parties concerned.

32. Insofar as the current UNRWA report did not extend to the period when the peace process had been disrupted by violence instigated by the Palestinian leadership, it offered a glimpse of the potential benefits of a more peaceful era. It noted, for example, that the flows of people between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1999 had increased in comparison with 1998. The opening on 18 October 1999 of a "safe passage" between the West Bank and Gaza Strip had facilitated communication and travel between the two areas. The real gross domestic product and gross national product in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1999 had grown by an estimated 6 and 7 per cent respectively. The residents of the Gaza Strip continued to rely heavily on employment opportunities in Israel, with hundreds of thousands of Palestinians earning at least US$ 500 a month there. He wondered if many third-world countries could point to such a record growth in GNP, or to such a rate of personal income. However, many of those positive developments had been threatened by the recent acts of violence incited by the Palestinian Authority. There was no doubt that the Palestinian side would blame Israel for its current economic hardships.

33. At the Camp David talks in July 2000, Israel had again made it clear that it would not accept the so-called "right of return" of Arab refugees to Israeli territory. It was assumed that some of them might choose to live in those areas of former Mandatory Palestine, which had come by agreement under the control of the Palestinian Authority and were outside the borders of Israel. However, Israel objected to allowing them entry into its territory. The way in which the Arab refugee problem had been created absolved Israel of any moral or legal responsibility. Strictly speaking, the question of the refugees had been generated by a deliberate campaign of Arab aggression directed against Israel from the very moment of its independence. It was highly important to recall that as a result of the war that took place, Israel had absorbed hundreds of thousands of Jews who were fleeing to safety from Arab countries and that those people had never been disparagingly called "refugees". Their living conditions gradually improved as a result of donations from Jews all over the world. Israel did not possess large reserves of oil like the Arab countries — countries which for fifty years had spent very little money providing homes and a future for their Palestinian brethren. One notable exception in that regard was Jordan, which had granted citizenship to Palestinians.

34. Fifty-two years ago, an exchange of populations had taken place. Such exchanges had also taken place as a result of other conflicts, for example those between Greece and Turkey and between India and Pakistan. The exchange was a two-way movement — a fact that should be borne in mind when calculating the cost of a peace settlement. The plight of the Arab refugees had arisen because of the Arabs' rejection of the inalienable right of the Jewish people to self-determination and to have its own State with Jerusalem as its capital. It should be emphasized that the exchange of populations that had taken place half a century ago was never going to be reversed. If Israel were to accede to the demands of Arab countries to implement the so-called "right of return" of refugees to Israeli territory, it would be tantamount to national suicide. That was clearly not one of the obligations of a Member State of the United Nations.

35. The principle set out by Mr. Ben-Ami, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, in his statement to the General Assembly might serve as a basis for a future settlement. Despite the preposterousness of the idea that a nation should create a State only in order to gather its exiles in a neighbouring State, Israel had expressed its willingness to participate actively in any international effort and fund aimed at providing the financial foundations for the resolution of the refugee problem. Out of humanitarian considerations, Israel might also accept a limited number of refugees within a scheme of family reunification. At present, the vast majority of Palestine refugees were living in Arab countries. Only one of the refugee camps was technically within the city limits of Israeli Jerusalem and was run by UNRWA. The Israeli authorities were cooperating with UNRWA within the framework of regulations established through mutual agreement, and in accordance with Israeli law. Technical problems were dealt with directly and in a generally satisfactory manner by representatives of both sides on the ground. Examples included movement of UNRWA personnel, vehicles and goods through the territory of Israel and

the Palestinian Authority, security checks at the Erez crossing between Israel and Gaza, the possibility of referring problems immediately to the Israeli Liaison Office, the period of validity of entry passes for local drivers of UNRWA vehicles, and the hours of operation of the Allenby Bridge.

36. The matter regarding the movement of goods through the Karni checkpoint had been referred to the relevant legal authorities for further study. The security problems that UNRWA had faced in the past would be lessened if and when the peace process moved forward — a matter that depended principally on Palestinian cooperation. With regard to UNRWA's claims for the refunding of expenses incurred at the Port of Ashdod for equipment imported by UNRWA for its own use, he recalled that between 1967 and July 1996, an agreement had been in effect under which Israel refunded fees paid by UNRWA to the Ashdod port authorities. Israel had subsequently informed UNRWA that, in its view, in accordance with agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, the Palestinian Authority was henceforth responsible for such payments. That matter had been referred to the relevant legal authorities for further study.

37. Israel appreciated the humanitarian work of UNRWA and strongly supported the request that all donor countries continued their financial assistance to that worthy cause. Those efforts were undermined, however, by the inclusion of hostile anti-Israel propaganda contained in textbooks used by UNRWA schools. Those books, which were purchased and presumably approved by UNRWA, denied Israel's right to exist — a gross violation of the spirit and letter of the peace process itself. Israel strongly urged the Committee to supervise the material being taught to Palestinian schoolchildren in order to ensure that a new generation was educated in the ways of peace and good-neighbourly relations. Recurrence of the recent tragic incidents would only be prevented through a concerted effort to educate Arab children to see their Jewish neighbours in a more tolerant light. In conclusion, his delegation noted that the principle of rationalization within the United Nations would be better served by consolidating the many resolutions on the subject under consideration into one — a resolution trimmed of irrelevant political verbiage that would provide a better focus on the key humanitarian issue of the refugees.

38. In response to the comments of the representative of Lebanon concerning the common border with Israel, he recalled that Israel had withdrawn forces from Southern Lebanon in full compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). In Security Council resolution 1310 (2000), the Security Council had called for the deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in the area, and for the Government of Lebanon to ensure the return of its effective authority and presence in the south, and in particular to proceed with a significant deployment of the Lebanese armed forces as soon as possible and to ensure a calm environment throughout the south. That must include taking full control over the area in proximity to the fence on the border with Israel and preventing disorder and acts of violence directed towards Israeli territory. Israel therefore called upon the other parties, chiefly the Government of Lebanon, to fulfil their responsibilities under the aforementioned resolutions, which entailed putting an end to those violations of Israeli sovereignty, establishing effective Lebanese authority in the area and acting to bring peace and security to the common border between Israel and Lebanon.

39. **Archbishop Martino** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the recent outbreak of violence in many of the areas served by UNRWA was a cause of grave concern. Under the prevailing conditions even greater demands were being placed on the limited resources of the agencies attempting to provide a normal standard of living for the refugees. The Holy See called upon the international community to continue to assist the Israelis and the Palestinians in bringing an end to violence and addressing the basic issues of justice and freedom. UNRWA and the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, founded in 1949, would continue to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees, but that should not be understood as a substitute for a just, stable and definitive solution to the problems of the region. That solution would, his delegation hoped, include the question of the city of Jerusalem.

40. In the light of the recent acts of violence, the Holy See renewed its consistent call for an internationally guaranteed statute to safeguard the sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims. It noted that for some time, the unique character of Jerusalem had resulted in de facto control of sacred sites by the appropriate religious authorities, regardless of who held political control. The proper recognition of the

spiritual patrimony of the three monotheistic religions, under international guarantees, must be a part of the negotiation process which would bring peace to the region. Because Jerusalem held such spiritual importance to believers representing almost 45 per cent of the world's population, a comprehensive, just and lasting solution, as recommended by the General Assembly in its resolution ES-10/2, should include internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and conscience of its inhabitants, as well as permanent, free and unhindered access to the Holy Places by the faithful of all religions and nationalities. Moreover, his delegation believed that the Holy Places should receive protection from their use for political gain.

41. His delegation appealed for greater international solidarity and the political will to end violence and bring justice and security to all peoples in the regions served by UNRWA and various non-governmental agencies. Pope John Paul II, speaking to refugees in Deheisheh camp, had urged them to continue to believe in the task they were fulfilling. Genuine and practical solidarity with those in need was not a favour conceded, but a demand of shared humanity and a recognition of the dignity of every human being.

42. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference) said that UNRWA remained indispensable under the existing conditions and reaffirmed that resolving the problem of Palestine refugees was a prerequisite for establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. Such a solution should be based on total withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 and implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

43. The United Nations had a responsibility towards all aspects of the question of Palestine, including the problem of Palestine refugees. The international community must provide UNRWA with all necessary political and financial support in order to do its work until a comprehensive and lasting settlement was achieved that would allow Palestine refugees to return to their homes.

44. The Organization of the Islamic Conference supported the proposal of the delegation of Palestine for the revitalization of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, established by the General Assembly in resolution 194 (III) of 1948, to resolve the issue of the return of Palestinian refugees or their compensation. It should be emphasized that the issue of compensation for refugees was considered an integral element but not a substitute for their right of return. That principle had been reaffirmed during the International Conference on Palestine Refugees held in Paris in April 1999 by the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States. In closing, he commended the work of the Agency, which carried out its mandate despite serious hardships, and expressed gratitude to countries which for decades had hosted Palestine refugees and displaced persons, in particular Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Egypt. His delegation was also grateful to donor countries and hoped that they would increase their contributions to the Agency.

45. *Mr. Lewis (Antigua and Barbuda), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

46. **Mr. Hansen** (Commissioner-General, UNRWA) expressed his gratitude to the members of the Committee participating in the debate and offering their strong support to the Agency's activities. That support would, he hoped, be reflected on the level of the financing of the Agency, which remained significantly below the level of political support. In recent times UNRWA had faced exceptionally serious problems resulting from insufficient financial resources. For more than five years, the Agency had not been able to raise the salaries of its staff, who constantly demonstrated self-sacrifice and the readiness to work in difficult conditions, which, as had been particularly evident over the past two weeks, could have tragic consequences.

47. He believed that, with the availability of full funding for a high level of projects, which had always been characteristic of UNRWA, it would manage to hold on until the time when there was no longer any need for it. That would make it possible to sustain the refugees' faith that the international community had not lost interest in their fate. He was deeply grateful to those countries which had made generous contributions to the budget of UNRWA, and hoped that Member States would fulfil their obligations towards the financing of the Agency.

48. **Mr. Shraideh** (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that in conferring citizenship on

Palestine refugees, his country had done so without prejudice to their exercise of all their rights. They continued to have the right to return and to full compensation for the material and moral losses they had incurred.

49. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Permanent Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel had again attempted to deny Israeli responsibility for the disastrous situation of Palestine refugees. Israel had a moral, legal and financial responsibility to resolve the question of Palestine. Nobody doubted that the Palestine refugees were unable to return to their homes solely as a result of Israel's intransigence. The Palestine refugees living in camps in the Occupied Territories remained under the Israeli occupation to which the entire Palestinian people, especially refugees, continued to be exposed. The current situation was the direct result of Israeli provocation which had begun on 28 September and had continued to date. Israeli tanks and armed forces were concentrated around the Palestinian settlements, and it was Israel that was using excessive force against civilians.

50. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the assertions made by the representative of Israel had no basis in reality. The Arab people, famous for their patience and their firm belief in the possibility of peaceful coexistence, had not persecuted Jews remaining in Arab countries and had always behaved towards them with great respect. Israel had been behind the events which had forced them to emigrate. The notion of population exchange to which the representative of Israel had referred was somewhat surprising. People were not goods to be bought or sold.

51. It was Israel that was guilty of exiling the Palestinians; therefore it would be unfair to expect Arab countries to shoulder the full burden of the Palestine refugees. It was not right to assume that the oil-producing Arab countries should see to the welfare of people who had been placed in a disastrous situation at Israel's behest. He stressed that the Palestine refugees who currently resided in many countries of the world, wanted to return to their homes, towns and villages.

52. *The Committee thereby concluded its general debate of agenda item 84.*

Agenda item 82: Effects of atomic radiation

Draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.6/Rev.1.

53. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to take action on the draft resolution contained in document A/C.4/55/L.6/Rev.1.

54. *Draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.6/Rev.1 was adopted.*

55. **Mr. Ling** (Belarus), speaking in explanation of his country's position after the adoption of the draft resolution, said that his delegation had joined the consensus decision on the draft resolution since most of the amendments proposed by the delegations of Belarus and Ukraine had been accommodated in the revised draft. At the same time, the Republic of Belarus assumed that the substance of the amendments introduced should be understood as follows: firstly, in the second preambular paragraph and in paragraph 2 beginning with the words "Taking (takes) note with appreciation of the work of the (...) Scientific Committee (...) and of the release of its extensive report", the words "with appreciation" related only to the activities of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and not to the contents of its report, whose conclusions in respect of the chapter devoted to the effects of radiation on human beings after the Chernobyl disaster (annex J of the report of the Scientific Committee for 2000) did not correspond to the actual situation with respect to the medical consequences of the catastrophe; second, paragraph 4 of the draft resolution, ending with the words "... and invites the Scientific Committee to submit its programme of work to the General Assembly", envisage a timely presentation by the Scientific Committee of its programme and plan of work to States Members of the United Nations so that scientists and experts from interested countries should have sufficient time to communicate their latest scientific data and research findings to the Scientific Committee so that they might be taken into account in the preparation by the Committee of its future scientific reports; third, the new paragraph 9 which read "Invites the Scientific Committee to continue its consultations with scientists and experts from interested Member States in the process of preparing future scientific reports" was seen as a vital element of the resolution establishing the feedback mechanisms between the Scientific Committee and interested Member States and providing for close and mutually beneficial international cooperation with the broadest possible

involvement of scientists and experts in the field of radiology.

56. His delegation confirmed its readiness to cooperate fully with the Scientific Committee in its future work studying the epidemiological and environmental consequences of the Chernobyl accident and in the exchange of data and information in that field, and requested that the issue of further study of the medical and environmental consequences of the Chernobyl accident should be included in the Committee's immediate plan of work.

57. **Mr. Yel'chenko** (Ukraine), speaking after the vote in explanation of his country's position, said that the consensus approval of the resolution on the effects of atomic radiation did not necessarily imply common consent. In that connection, his delegation wished to place on record some of the reservations that had compelled it to remove its name from the list of sponsors of the resolution that had just been adopted.

58. The current report of the Scientific Committee and its scientific annexes, which paid particular attention to the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and its consequences, had been brought to the attention of the competent authorities in Ukraine, in particular experts from the National Academy of Sciences, and carefully studied by them. An analysis of the document showed that a great deal of the most recent data and results of the studies on the effect of the Chernobyl accident on the health of the Ukrainian population recently carried out by Ukraine and other interested countries had not been adequately reflected in the report. In particular, the report omitted some proven scientific findings and presented conclusions and observations that ran counter to scientific facts and the existing reality. For that reason, Ukraine could not consider the content of the report satisfactory and had reservations regarding a positive assessment.

59. The delegations of Ukraine and Belarus had submitted a series of amendments to the resolution which had, to a large extent, been incorporated in the text. They related in the first instance to the need for further consultations between the Scientific Committee and experts and scientists from interested Member States in the process of preparing future reports of the Committee. For Ukraine, interested Member States referred in the first place to those States that were under study by the Committee. Strengthening the mechanism for consultation would ensure greater transparency and objectivity in the results of the Committee's analyses. The members of the Committee should establish closer contacts with scientific circles in Ukraine, especially during the study of the effects of the Chernobyl accident, and should visit the Chernobyl zone more frequently to obtain first-hand information concerning the effects of atomic radiation on the population of Ukraine.

60. The two delegations had also underlined the importance of increased coordination between the Scientific Committee and the General Assembly by inviting the Committee to submit its programme of work to the General Assembly. Such action would enable Member States to provide the Scientific Committee with up-to-date data in a timely manner, thus making a valuable contribution to the Committee's work.

61. Despite the extensive scientific and medical knowledge about the effects of atomic radiation, many important questions concerning the effects of radiation on human health still remained unanswered fourteen years after the Chernobyl accident. That fact underlined the need to continue scientific studies and assessment of the effects of the Chernobyl accident on human health, making full use of the information and data provided by Member States through the consultation mechanism. Ukraine recommended that the Scientific Committee should, in its future plans, provide for further study of the effects on human health of ionizing radiation from the Chernobyl accident, and was willing to provide the Committee with all available data in that regard.

Agenda item 83: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

Draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.8

62. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to take a decision on the draft resolution contained in document A/C.4/55/L.8.

63. **Mr. Eguiguren** (Chile) said that his delegation had submitted draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.8 on behalf of the Working Group of the Whole on International Cooperation on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The Secretariat had provided information on the budgetary implications of paragraphs 28 and 29 of the draft resolution, in connection with which some delegations had made specific reservations. Agreement had finally

been reached, and paragraph 29 of draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.8 should be amended to read as follows: "Requests the Secretary-General to start implementing those measures and activities that are contained in the above-mentioned plan of action and are currently within the programme of work of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, based on the recommendations of UNISPACE III, and to ensure the full implementation of the plan with necessary resources in 2002;".

64. His delegation hoped that the amendment that he had read out would be incorporated in paragraph 29 of the draft resolution and that the draft would be adopted by consensus at a subsequent meeting in the near future.

65. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would take a decision on draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.8 at a later stage in its work.

66. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on agenda items 84 and 85 was not entirely appropriate, and he appealed to the Chairman and members of the Committee to extend the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions until Thursday, 2 November 2000. That would enable consultations to be held on the draft resolutions on those two agenda items. If more time were required, the matter might be considered again.

67. **The Chairman** suggested that, in the light of the request by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions should be extended until 6 p.m. on Thursday, 2 November 2000.

68. **It was so decided**.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/55/SR.17

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 6 November 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Kiwanuka ..... (Uganda)

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00-73002 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 85: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/55/453, A/55/261-265, A/55/373 and Add.1, A/55/392-S/2000/874, A/55/432-S/2000/921, A/55/466-S/2000/971, A/55/474-S/2000/984, A/55/490-S/2000/993; A/C.4/55/L.17-L.21)

1. **Mr. de Saram** (Sri Lanka), introducing, in his capacity as its Chairman, the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/55/453), said that the Special Committee had considered its programme of work in March 2000, and between 19 and 31 May 2000 its members had visited Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic to hear statements from persons who were knowledgeable as to conditions in the occupied territories. The Special Committee had been unable to visit the occupied territories, although at its meetings it had heard from a number of Israeli citizens concerned with human rights issues in the occupied territories. In its work, the Special Committee had also made use of newspaper reports published in the occupied territories. Other materials received by the Special Committee were listed in the annexes to its report.

2. Having considered all the information and materials received, the Special Committee, as in previous years, had reached the conclusion that in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan an extensive system of Israeli laws and regulations, as well as administrative measures and procedures, had been introduced which to a substantial degree were discriminatory with regard to the Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories and substantially curtailed important aspects of their lives. Some of the particular aspects of the occupation, on which persons heard by the Committee had focused attention, were set out in the relevant sections of the report of the Special Committee.

3. Some of the more topical issues connected with the occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem were the following: the building of new and the expansion of existing settlements and the fact that Israeli settlers were armed; bypass roads used only by settlers to connect one settlement with another; a general fragmentation of land as a consequence of the establishment of settlements and the building of bypass roads and quarries; the negative environmental effects on surrounding lands of the establishment of settlements, usually on high land; heightened tension and violence in connection with the establishment of settlements; the restriction on freedom of movement within and between Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, particularly when a system of closures applied to Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which generally disrupted the Palestinian economy and created major problems for the Palestinian population, especially in emergency situations; restrictions on the construction or expansion of Palestinian housing and major delays and difficulties in obtaining authorizations for carrying out such work; the demolition of houses constructed or expanded without authorization; unjust distribution of water resources in conditions of acute shortage; restriction on the right to reside in East Jerusalem and the negative consequences of such a policy for the everyday lives of Palestinians and for the demographic composition of the population of East Jerusalem; alteration of the boundaries of East Jerusalem and the establishment of settlements within or in close proximity to East Jerusalem; the system of detention, the conditions of detention and the arbitrary extension of periods of detention and the use of physical coercion in interrogations despite prohibition of that practice by the Supreme Court of Israel.

4. Notwithstanding such restrictions and infringements in occupied Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the Special Committee, like many others at the United Nations, still hoped that developments in the peace process and the meetings between Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Barak, with the personal involvement of President Clinton, might lead in the not too distant future to a tangible improvement in the situation of the population of those territories. However, in the closing days of September 2000, tragic events had occurred in East Jerusalem which had led to a general outbreak of violence. In paragraphs 34 and 35 of its report, the Special Committee had noted those occurrences, and also the receipt of a communication from the Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva, drawing attention to the eruption of violence, the deaths of civilians, including children, and the disproportionate use of force by the occupying

authorities and requesting an urgent meeting of the Security Council to consider the developing situation.

5. On 7 October 2000, the Security Council had adopted resolution 1322 (2000) in which it had, inter alia, expressed deep concern at the tragic events that had taken place since 28 September leading to numerous deaths and injuries, mostly among Palestinians. The continuance of those tragic events and loss of life, mostly of Palestinians, during the past several weeks in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem was deeply regrettable.

6. Turning to the sections of the report dealing with the occupied Syrian Golan, which was occupied by Israel in 1967 and "annexed" in 1981, he said that the General Assembly and the Security Council regarded the annexation as illegal and null and void. The report of the Special Committee made reference to particular aspects of the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, such as the increase in the number of settlers and the expansion of existing settlements; the deliberate alteration of the demographic composition of the population of the occupied Golan, with undesirable consequences for the land and the environment; the unfair distribution of water resources, which were controlled by the Israeli authorities; the disadvantageous economic situation of the Syrian population of the Golan, which was engaged mainly in agriculture, in relation to the settlers; the lack of adequate employment opportunities in the occupied Golan, the low prices for agricultural produce and the high taxes, inadequate health care and the practice of arbitrary arrest and detention; the tense relations between the settlers, who were armed, and the Syrian population; attempts to change the identity and culture of the Syrians living in the occupied territories by the misrepresentation of Syrian culture and history and the marginalization of the Syrian Arab heritage and language; the cultural and environmental damage caused by the excavation of archaeological sites and the removal of antiquities from the occupied Golan; the serious problem of land mines, which represented a grave hazard, especially for children; the restriction on freedom of movement, which hindered normal social communication between relatives, friends and colleagues, leading in many cases to the fragmentation and long-term separation of families.

7. In conclusion, on behalf of the members of the Special Committee, he expressed the hope that there would soon be a return to dialogue and the peace process. The direct and indirect consequences of a general occupation of territories for such a long period of time had a serious negative effect across the entire spectrum of human relationships, both between and among the occupied and the occupiers.

8. **Ms. Abdelhady Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) expressed the appreciation of her delegation to the members of the Special Committee for their constant efforts. In spite of certain statements in recent past sessions to the effect that the Special Committee was an anachronism, the tragic events and the deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, once more confirmed that its mandate was both appropriate and timely. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands had been continuing for more than three decades, and the violation by the occupying Power of the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories remained a daily occurrence.

9. It was the Israeli occupation which was an anachronism, representing as it did a glaring anomaly on the landscape of the international community as it entered the twenty-first century. The occupation was an aberration which should long ago have been relegated to the dustbin of historical transgressions against humanity. It was from the Israeli occupation that all other violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories arose. The practices and policies of Israel were a constant reminder of the injustice, cruelty and extreme difficulties encountered by the Arab population under the prolonged occupation of the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan, in violation of international law and international humanitarian law. Israeli violations were continuing despite their illegality, despite the international consensus against the occupation and the policies and practices associated with it, and despite countless resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly in that regard. The current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, was a stark reminder of that fact.

10. At a time when the entire international community hoped for an end to the Israeli occupation through the conclusion of a final settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, the situation had deteriorated dramatically. The deterioration had come about because of the provocation which had occurred on 28 September 2000 at Al-Haram Al-Sharif in

occupied East Jerusalem, which had been followed by an extreme military response by the Israeli occupying forces to protests by the Palestinian people throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. The most recent Israeli military campaign had been characterized by the use by Israel of live ammunition and heavy weaponry against the civilian population of the occupied territories. The excessive and indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli occupying army against Palestinian civilians in the past five weeks had led to the wilful killing of more than 150 Palestinians and the wounding of thousands more. Many people believed that such gross violations of human rights by the occupying Power could be regarded as war crimes. Over one third of the victims were children under 18 years of age.

11. Turning to the reports submitted by the Special Committee, she emphasized that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, was still very tense because of the violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people. The reports of the Special Committee made it clear that Israel, as the occupying Power, was continuing to commit numerous breaches of international law and international humanitarian law in the occupied territory. Such violations included frequent instances of collective punishment of the Palestinian population. The confiscation of land, the exploitation of water resources and the demolition of houses were continuing. There were frequent restrictions on the freedom of movement of Palestinians and Palestinian goods within the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and between parts of that territory and on entry to and exit from it. That included the difficulties associated with the operation of the safe passage opened the previous year between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. During the period covered by the report, there had been closures of the occupied territories which had practically become permanent in recent weeks. The Palestinians experienced continuing difficulties as a result of the obstacles placed in their way by the occupying authorities with regard to the issue of identity cards and travel permits. Moreover, the practice of administrative detention, harassment, physical mistreatment and torture of Palestinians in Israeli jails persisted.

12. As noted in the reports of the Special Committee, illegal colonial settlement activities were continuing at a feverish pace, entailing countless violations of international law and international humanitarian law; they included the construction of new dwellings, the expansion of existing settlements, the confiscation of new land for the building of bypass roads, land seizures by Israeli settlers, including hilltop outposts, and, in recent months, the fortification of settlements with light and heavy equipment and weaponry. Such practices were part of Israel's ongoing attempts to change the status of the occupied territory or parts of it and to change the demographic composition of the territory. Israel had continued that policy regardless of the peace process.

13. Changing the legal status, character and demographic composition of occupied East Jerusalem was a central element of the Israeli campaign to Judaize the territory with a view to prejudicing its final status. The above-mentioned Israeli practices were in serious violation of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, which was applicable to all of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. The applicability of that Convention had been reaffirmed in 26 Security Council resolutions and in a multitude of resolutions of the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies. The international community must undertake serious efforts to ensure universal respect for international law and international humanitarian law in all circumstances and cases. She reiterated that the Israeli Government must accept the de jure applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and fully respect and comply with its provisions.

14. It was to be hoped that the current tragic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, would improve. In order for that to happen, the Israeli occupying army must halt the excessive and indiscriminate use of force against Palestinian civilians and withdraw its forces from Palestinian cities, villages and camps. That alone could pave the way for the genuine resumption of the peace process. Lastly, she stressed the relevance of the work of the Special Committee, which was an integral part of the work of the United Nations as it carried out its permanent responsibility to resolve the question of Palestine.

15. **Mr. Al-Absi** (United Arab Emirates) expressed appreciation to the Special Committee for its report, which reflected the real state of affairs with regard to violations of the rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories.

16. In the past few months the world had witnessed massive violence on the part of Israeli forces against defenceless Palestinians, including women, old people and children. Moreover, Israel was carrying out a policy of massive human rights violations, which was forcing the Palestinians to abandon those territories. The Israeli Government stubbornly refused to comply with its responsibilities under the relevant international resolutions and the agreements signed with the Palestinian side.

17. Israel was further intensifying its inhumane policy, which was designed to perpetuate the occupation and exploitation of the Palestinian territories and to change their legal and demographic status. That applied in particular to Jerusalem, which occupied a special place in the history and religion of the Palestinian people.

18. The statistical data contained in the report, and the mass-media accounts of Israeli crimes against the Palestinians, showed the aggressive intention of the Israeli Government to perpetuate the occupation of Palestinian towns, particularly Jerusalem. For example, the Israeli plans for building settlements on the West Bank went counter to Israel's obligation to curb budgetary expenditures for such purposes. In addition, Israel was carrying out a policy of Judaization of the Palestinian territories. It exploited the natural resources of the Palestinians and discarded toxic wastes. Such a policy was completely contrary to international law, the international legal order, and the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

19. The foregoing meant that the international community, as embodied in the United Nations, must put an end to such glaring violations of the rights of the Palestinian people. Israel, as the occupying Power, must end the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the occupied Arab Golan. His Government also drew attention to the need to establish an international mechanism for the defence of the Palestinian people and an independent fact-finding commission that would carry out the necessary investigations and call the guilty to account.

20. It was to be hoped that the international community would pursue its efforts in the framework of the Special Committee until the occupation had finally ended. A just and final settlement would be possible only after Israel had put an end to the occupation of Arab territories and had demolished the settlements, and the Palestinians had exercised their right to self-determination on the basis of the land-for-peace principle.

21. **Mr. Zohar** (Israel), speaking on a point of order, requested the speaker to adhere to the established rules.

22. **Ms. Abercrombie-Winstanley** (United States of America) said that in the view of her Government, the resolutions presented under agenda item 85 contained outdated formulations that failed to support the peace process. While the difficulties on the road to peace could not be ignored, the accomplishments to date should not be minimized. The parties were taking steps to implement the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement of 17 October 2000 and they should be encouraged to implement it fully.

23. Her delegation strongly urged Member States to delete the standard call for the Special Committee to continue its work and report in the following year. The Committee's existence was inconsistent with the joint efforts of Israel and the Palestinians to resolve their differences. Its "work" did nothing to support the cause of peace. It was necessary to look for opportunities to strengthen an atmosphere of reconciliation between the parties in order to attain the goal shared by all, namely, a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

24. Her Government, while reaffirming its view that the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 applied to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, nonetheless firmly opposed the specific references to Jerusalem in the resolutions concerned. Such references were part of an inappropriate attempt to prejudge arrangements which in reality could be achieved only through direct negotiations between the parties.

25. **Mr. Al-Hadidi** (Jordan) said that his delegation had carefully studied the report submitted by the Special Committee. It was concerned that, year in and year out, Israel was continuing with its practice vis-à-vis the Palestinians, which would aggravate the socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories and was inflicting damage on their inhabitants.

26. Israel was pursuing a settlements construction policy in the West Bank and Jerusalem, violating the provisions of international resolutions concerning the Palestinian territories. Those actions were illegal and undermined the bases of the peace negotiations. The city of Jerusalem was the key to solving the problem of

establishing peace, and a settlement had to be based on the principle that East Jerusalem was Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. Security Council resolution 242 (1967) on Palestinian sovereignty should be applied, so that East Jerusalem could become the capital of an independent Palestinian State.

27. It was essential to defend the rights of Arabs and Muslims to their holy places, and establishment of Israeli sovereignty over that territory, which must be open to persons of all faiths, was not permissible.

28. The Government of Jordan condemned the crimes of the occupying power and demanded that Israel withdraw its forces from occupied territories in accordance with Security Council resolution 242 (1967) on the creation of a sovereign Palestinian State. Jordan had always promoted the establishment of peace in that long-suffering region. It had accordingly taken part in the Madrid peace negotiations with Israel, as a result of which a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan had been signed. Jordan hoped that that treaty would become the first step towards the establishment of peace in the region.

29. For peace in the Middle East to be durable, it had to be universal. That meant that the occupied Golan had to be returned to the Syrian Arab Republic in implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Palliatives were not appropriate: there had to be a radical solution to the problem and the resolutions of the international community had to be implemented in the interests of the establishment of peace. The establishment of peace was impossible without a solution of the Palestinian problem, but a just and final settlement would in its turn give the Palestinians the opportunity to strive for autonomy and acquire the right to self-determination in its own national territory, which would serve the interests of the establishment of a just and lasting peace.

30. **Mr. Dausá Céspedes** (Cuba) said that, in the current situation, when Israeli aggression was threatening to wipe out the achievements of the peace process in the region, the Special Committee's work acquired even greater importance for the achievement of full respect for the human rights of the Palestinian people and of all Arabs in the occupied territories.

31. A few days previously, the Cuban delegation had stated in the Security Council that, if the United Nations did not take effective measures to revive the peace process and prevent provocative acts on the part of those Israeli circles which opposed a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict, it would merely be setting the stage for the next crisis. Events had confirmed how right those words had been. The rocket attacks in Ramallah and Gaza and the gross violence towards the Palestinian population of the occupied territories not only represented yet another glaring and mass violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people but also showed that Israel was not at all interested in a peaceful, just and final settlement of the Middle East conflict. The norms of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations were once again being flouted. The human rights of the entire population were being violated in the grossest manner, and the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and resolutions concerning its applicability to the occupied Arab territories were as usual not being implemented.

32. The Special Committee regularly presented the General Assembly with extensive information concerning the flouting of the most elementary rights of the Palestinian people, the Syrian population of the occupied Golan and of other Arabs in the occupied territories. The documents submitted gave details of the Israeli policy of construction of settlements, confiscation of land, closing of territories, harsh treatment of prisoners, withdrawal of residents' permits for Jerusalem, and also the problems of water supply and sanitation in the occupied territories and other problems which were part of everyday life for the population of the occupied territories. In light of that, it was hardly surprising that for so many years the Government of Israel had not allowed representatives of the Special Committee to visit the territories.

33. The delegation of Cuba, as it had in the past, demanded cessation of the crimes and guarantees of full respect for all the human rights of the Palestinian people and the rest of the Arabs in the occupied territories. Cuba fully shared the international community's desire for a solution of the problems of the Middle East, for which one prerequisite was a final settlement of the Palestinian problem as the pivotal element in the Middle East crisis. A just and lasting peace was unthinkable without full implementation of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people and of the Arabs living under occupation.

34. At the beginning of the previous decade, there had been signs in the Middle East of very hopeful progress towards peace — the Madrid peace

conference, the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and later the signing of the Wye River Accords. However, that negotiating process had been undermined, and all the hopes of the international community had collapsed after ultra-right-wing forces had launched their provocative actions and Israel had unleashed aggression against the Palestinian people. In that regard, the delegation of Cuba was convinced that the Special Committee should continue its important work until a final settlement was reached and the most elementary rights of the Palestinian people and of the other Arabs in the occupied territories were fully achieved.

35. Cuba once again expressed its unqualified support for the rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent and sovereign State with its capital in East Jerusalem. Cuba demanded the return of all Arab territories occupied by Israel, reaffirmed the illegal nature of Israeli settlements built in the occupied Arab territories, and gave an assurance to the Arabs and the Syrian and Palestinian peoples that the Cuban people were, as always, in full solidarity with their cause.

36. **Mr Aboulgheit** (Egypt) said that his delegation was in favour of the Special Committee continuing its work as long as there was no final settlement of the conflict or resolution of the Palestinian problem. Its report gave a disquieting picture of the practices and policies which had prompted Israel's actions in the territories it had occupied since 1967.

37. Recently, the international media had been full of information about the bloody events in the occupied Palestinian territories. Those events were the outcome of provocative visits by the leader of the Israeli opposition party to the area of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The reports graphically showed that the Palestinian people was continuing to suffer from the consequences of the cruel, unjust and humiliating occupation, while being asked at the negotiating table to make concessions. The Palestinian people's dignity was being trampled upon and it was being repressed, yet the Palestinians were not allowed even to express their anger and outrage at what was going on.

38. Much had been written about the struggle of peoples against colonialism, and much renown attached to the fate of heroes of the national liberation struggle who had sacrificed their lives so that future generations could live in freedom and dignity. The struggle of the Palestinian people against occupation was a legitimate and just struggle of the same kind. The only logical outcome was an end to the Israeli occupation. To ignore that would make the process more painful for everyone.

39. His delegation wished to draw attention to certain points. First, the Palestinian people had an inalienable right to self-determination and the creation of its own independent State throughout its occupied territory, with its capital in East Jerusalem. That was the essence of the peace process and of the intifada. Second, the repressive measures by Israel against the Palestinian population and the use of excessive force were a gross abuse of human rights and also of the obligations flowing from the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Third, the recent events clearly showed that the reason for the persisting explosive situation was the continuing presence of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. The way to a solution of the problem lay in the return of the settlers to Israel.

40. Finally, all that confirmed the relevance of the demands made at the Cairo high-level meeting of Arab countries on 21-22 October for the creation of a United Nations force for a certain period of time to protect the Palestinian population, so that no more Palestinians need perish in clashes with the armed occupation forces.

41. No less serious was the practice of Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan, where the building of Israeli settlements was continuing. Egypt declared its support for the Palestinian people and the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan, and its solidarity with them. Israel must realize that the attainment of peace in the Middle East was indissolubly bound up with the achievement of a just and final settlement of the Palestinian question and an end to arbitrary rule, which left no room for peace and no hope for those seeking to establish it in the region.

42. **Mr. Hafiana** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) expressed the hope that the work of the Special Committee would continue and be stepped up, especially in view of the campaign of repression unleashed by the occupation forces against the population of the occupied territories, the first victims of which were children. The current actions of the occupying Power were merely a continuation of Israel's standard policy of terrorizing the Palestinians and driving them out of their territory.

Nevertheless, the Palestinian people was resisting; it was living and struggling to preserve its dignity and uniqueness and its land, on which it had lived for thousands of years and from which the Israeli settlers were trying to expel it.

43. The acts recently carried out by the occupying authorities had been provoked by the visit of the terrorist Sharon to Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The victims of those acts, perpetrated with the use of modern weaponry, were peaceful Palestinians demanding that the agreements reached in Oslo, and subsequent understandings, should be observed, that peace and stability should be established in their land and that those guilty of bloody crimes should be prosecuted.

44. His delegation called upon the Special Committee to continue its work, and appealed to the international community to provide material support for the Committee to enable it to carry out the tasks before it.

45. In conclusion, his delegation supported the right of the Palestinian people to return to its homeland, and its right to self-determination and to the creation of an independent State on the entire territory belonging to it. The international community must take all necessary steps to put an end to any action by the occupying Israeli forces against the Palestinian population. The conscience of the international community must not permit the continuation of such a policy against the unarmed civilian Palestinian population, which had suffered repression for over half a century.

46. **Ms Naidoo** (South Africa) said that South Africa firmly believed that it remained the permanent responsibility of the United Nations to be fully engaged with the Palestinian question until a definitive solution was achieved. The important role played by the Secretary-General at the recent summit meeting at Sharm Al-Sheikh reaffirmed the primacy of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security.

47. At the summit meeting held in South Africa in 1998, the Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement had reaffirmed the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to the entire occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. In that regard, her delegation called for the full and speedy implementation of Security Council resolution 1322 (2000) of 7 October 2000, which reiterated the call to Israel to abide strictly by its legal obligations under that Convention. Closures of territory, blockades and restrictions on the freedom of movement of people and goods imposed by Israel had resulted in the economic suffocation of the Palestinian people. It was incumbent upon the United Nations to adopt measures to protect the Palestinian people and to ensure that the actions which were exacerbating their suffering ceased.

48. The question of Palestine constituted the nucleus of the Middle East conflict. The achievement of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the creation of an independent State was pivotal to the achievement of a sustained and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The only means of securing lasting peace, security and stability in the region lay through peaceful negotiations. In that regard, her delegation urged the parties to take the necessary steps to restore calm and thereby to create an atmosphere conducive to the resumption of negotiations. At their meeting in New York in September 2000, the Ministers of the non-aligned countries had reaffirmed their determination to strive actively towards the achievement of a just and lasting peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The most important condition for moving the peace process forward was to observe the principle of "land for peace".

49. **Mr. Obadi** (Yemen) said that for several weeks the world had been witnessing a crime of mass destruction being committed against the Palestinian people, in which the main victims were children, women and the elderly. As a result of that aggressive show of force by Israel in the occupied Arab territories, 182 people had already died and thousands had been wounded. The Israeli forces, with tanks, guns, helicopters and rockets, were occupying Palestinian towns and villages, obstructing any progress on the road to a just and lasting peace. With its disproportionate use of force, Israel was violating the norms of international humanitarian law and its obligations under the peace agreement, as well as the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, the relevant Security Council resolutions and resolution ES-10/7 adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session.

50. The international community must condemn Israel's criminal acts against the Arab civilian population. Israel was making a mistake if it thought that brute force could stop the uprising of the Palestinian people defending its rights and could break its will. Only a complete withdrawal by Israel from all territories, including Jerusalem, could permit the

achievement of peaceful coexistence and secure a peaceful future for the entire region.

51. The international community must force Israel to acknowledge the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Instead of defending the civilian population, Israel was restricting the movement of people and goods, imposing a curfew and blockading Palestinian territories. Israel must be made to fulfil the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions and of General Assembly resolution 54/79. Contrary to the spirit and letter of the relevant United Nations resolutions confirming the inadmissibility of the acquisition of lands by force, Israel was continuing the construction of settlements in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan and the confiscation of new lands belonging to the Palestinian administration. By its actions Israel was jeopardizing the continuation of the peace process and might once again create an atmosphere of violence, disorder and instability in the region.

52. The international community had the right to exert pressure on Israel to discontinue its occupation, and to take practical measures to secure implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolution 904 (1994) regarding the confiscation of arms from Israeli settlers.

53. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that Israel had declared war on the Palestinians, a war in which more than 150 people had been killed in the past four weeks. It had given Amnesty International grounds for describing Israel's actions as war crimes. However, the Israeli leadership was stubbornly continuing its bloody policy and its attempts to mislead world public opinion by using its dominance of the mass media. The whole world had seen a child killed at the hands of Israeli soldiers and, although television camera lenses had not captured the dozens of other children being killed, the world was aware of the scale of the suffering afflicting the Palestinians, of their just struggle, and of the reprisals carried out by the Israelis with the aim of destroying them and suppressing their legitimate aspiration to freedom and realization of their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State on their land.

54. Israel was using old and new methods in its policy, continuing environmental crimes: over the past few days, thousands of olive trees had been uprooted in the West Bank, representing an environmental and humanitarian disaster.

55. The Chairman and other members of the Special Committee, who had drawn up on impartial, detailed and objective report, were deserving of gratitude. In that connection it was necessary to emphasize the enduring and increasing topicality of the Special Committee's work, for only with its help could the international community be made aware of Israel's crimes in the occupied Arab territories. Any attempt to weaken the Special Committee would amount to a cover-up of the continuing Israeli policy of violating the legitimate rights of the Arab population in the occupied territories and to inadmissible faint-heartedness in the face of monstrous violations of human rights. Ever since the Special Committee had been established, Israel had refused to recognize it and to cooperate with it so long as the Special Committee was entrusted with exposing Israel's policy of terror towards the Arab population and the flagrant violations of the norms of international law committed by Israel.

56. Following its occupation of the Syrian Golan, Israel had adopted legislative and other measures to Judaize the region, establishing settlements and attracting settlers from all over the world. Since 1967, Israel had been violating all the United Nations resolutions and international treaties. The occupying forces had expelled the Syrian Arab population from 244 towns, settlements, villages and farms, confiscated water resources and destroyed agricultural lands. The construction of new and the expansion of existing Israeli settlements, currently numbering about 40, was continuing in the Syrian Golan. Some 500,000 Syrian refugees, expelled from the Golan, were still awaiting the opportunity to return to their homes and land.

57. All that ran counter to the peace process, which was based on the condition that Israeli forces should withdraw from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967. The Israeli occupation authorities, which had not limited themselves to confiscating 96 per cent of the land in the Golan, had blockaded the remaining five villages, restricting their opportunities for expansion by introducing complicated procedures involving building permits as well as excessive taxation. The Israeli occupation authorities, and particularly the armed forces, had taken a number of measures which were destructive of the environment in the occupied part of the Golan. Two years previously, international experts had reported that Israel had dumped 52 tonnes of

chemical and nuclear waste in the occupied Arab territories. That was fraught with environmental disaster for the Middle East.

58. Israel's policy towards the population of the occupied Syrian Golan took various forms: detentions, torture, house arrests and limitation of the right of Syrian nationals to visit their families in the Syrian Arab Republic. Dozens of Syrian nationals were being held in Israel prisons and camps in the most inhuman conditions.

59. In the light of those generally known facts, the question inevitably arose of the fate of the peace process and one of its basic principles — the principle of "land for peace". The behaviour of Israel obviously showed that it desired such peace, which would be in its interests and would make it possible to maintain the occupation and control of the Syrian Golan and the other occupied Arab territories. In order to achieve that aim, Israel was pursuing a policy of violating basic human rights and the norms of international humanitarian law. Despite the peace slogans proclaimed by the present Israeli Government, the Israeli mass media were reporting new plans for building settlements and attracting settlers to the occupied Syrian Golan. That was surprising, as the Israeli leaders knew very well that the occupation, oppression and injustice could not continue and that the occupied Golan was an integral part of the Syrian Arab Republic, which would be returned to that country.

60. In its communiqué of 27 August 1998, the European Union had called on Israel to stop the expansion of settlements into the occupied Syrian Golan, as that policy cast doubt on Israel's desire for peace. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and France had issued a communiqué confirming that Israel's policy violated the norms of international law and was not furthering the cause of peace.

61. Peace was incompatible with Israel's current demonstration of force, in which Palestinians were being killed who were not guilty of anything. His country again confirmed its willingness to work for a lasting and just peace on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and of the principle of "land for peace". That should guarantee the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Syrian Golan and from the occupied Palestinian territories, the completion of their withdrawal from the Lebanese territories and the release of the Lebanese held in Israeli jails. In order to achieve a lasting and just peace, Israel should cease the activities described in the report of the Special Committee.

62. In the light of the foregoing, the international community, and in particular the permanent members of the Security Council, should not close their eyes to the crimes being committed on a daily basis by Israel in the occupied Arab territories. Those criminal actions should be firmly condemned. Pressure should be exerted on the Government of Israel to cease its actions, which were a real threat to peace and security in the region and in the whole world.

63. **Mr. Al-Murri** (Qatar) said that the struggling Palestinian people was facing the inhuman actions of Israel, which was resorting to oppression and barbarity at a time when the international community was entering a new phase — a phase of dialogue and mutual understanding as means of settling disputes. The report of the Special Committee referred to the harsh sufferings which the occupying Power, in contravention of international law, was inflicting on the Palestinian people and other Arab civilians in the occupied territories. He emphasized the full applicability to Israel of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which, however, the occupying Power was blatantly violating. The report clearly indicated the scale of the tortures, massacres and humiliations to which prisoners in Israel were subjected, although in 1991 Israel had ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

64. The policy of confiscating land, destroying homes, building settlements, and de-Arabization, which was referred to in the report, revealed Israel's true intentions in relation to the peace process, which had come to a halt because of the policy of the Israeli leaders. In that connection, the international community had to exert pressure on the Government of Israel to convince it to stop the construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, where the land was meant for the Palestinian people. The Qatar delegation again confirmed the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to return to its land.

65. Qatar had repeatedly stated that a lasting peace in the Middle East could be achieved only by means of a peaceful and comprehensive settlement, complete withdrawal of Israel from all the Arab territories

occupied in 1967, including the Syrian Golan, and realization of the Palestinian people's inalienable right to form an independent State.

66. In view of the explosive situation that had developed and the many victims on the Palestinian side, the Qatar Government expressed its willingness to assume part of the expenses of the Special Rapporteur sent to the region by the Commission on Human Rights to study the actual situation. That was an indication that Qatar was continuing its policy of working towards peace in the Middle East. The initiative was in harmony with the Arab position of a strategic approach to peace.

67. Until Israel ceased its aggression and fulfilled its obligations in connection with the Middle East peace process in relation to both Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations should remain the forum in which the international community would condemn that aggression.

68. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference) said that, as shown by the periodic report of the Special Committee (A/55/373), Israel was defying the will of the international community. As long as the Israeli occupation was maintained and the gross violations of the rights of the Palestinian people by the occupying Power continued, the Special Committee should continue to discharge its mandate in connection with the Palestinian question.

69. The Israeli authorities were still carrying out illegal actions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. They were building illegal settlements and by-pass roads, confiscating land, demolishing houses, imposing severe restrictions on freedom of movement, exploiting and stealing natural resources, transferring more Israeli settlers, and detaining thousands of Palestinians and scores of Lebanese in Israeli prisons. Those actions were accompanied by violence and atrocities committed by armed Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians.

70. The Palestinians were resisting the occupation. They were defending their inalienable national rights and were defending their holy sites in East Jerusalem. Israel was trying to shift the blame onto the Palestinian side, claiming that the Palestinian Authority had provoked its citizens. But Israel was clearly responsible for the bloody events that were taking place.

71. Referring to the Internet edition of *The Jerusalem Post* of 12 September 2000, he pointed out that the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories had been strengthening their defences. The objective of the visit by Ariel Sharon to the Haram al-Sharif had been to make the situation explode in the occupied Palestinian territory and to prevent continuation of the peace process and implementation of all the international resolutions obligating Israel to withdraw from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967.

72. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) had consistently supported the Palestinian people in its just struggle to put an end to the Israeli occupation and to regain its inalienable rights. OIC also supported the Lebanese Government's insistence on the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Lebanese territory, including the Shaba farms, and the release of all Lebanese citizens from Israeli jails. OIC again reaffirmed that the Israeli policy of annexation and construction of illegal settlements on the Syrian Golan constituted a grave violation of international law.

73. Peace in the Middle East could be achieved only with complete Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied in 1967 and full restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people.

74. **Mr. Zohar** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, briefly informed the members of the Committee of the contents of an official communication from the Prime Minister of Israel, which would soon be sent to the capitals of many countries. The communication stated that, since the recent eruption of the violence, Israel had attempted time and again to stabilize the situation and put an end to it so as to pave the way for the quick resumption of the peace negotiations. Nonetheless, for over a month it had witnessed an orchestrated attempt by the Palestinian authority to replace the peace process with an armed struggle.

75. At the Camp David Summit, the present Israeli Government had been prepared to look into ideas which had never been discussed by previous Governments. The Palestinian side had not only avoided discussing those ideas, but had chosen a different path altogether. Israel had fulfilled ahead of schedule the obligations it had undertaken in Paris, in Sharm-el-Sheikh and at the recent meeting between Chairman Arafat and Minister Peres in Gaza.

Unfortunately the sole response on the part of the Palestinian side had been a continuation of the violence. The Arafat-Peres agreement had not been successful on the ground.

76. Every day, there were dozens of instances in which Palestinians (including the security forces and the Tanzim, who were not allowed to carry arms under agreements between Israel and the Palestinians) used live ammunition against Israeli soldiers, peaceful civilians, means of transport and civilian targets. A car bomb had recently exploded near a Jerusalem market, killing two persons and wounding ten others. Responsibility for the attack had been claimed by the Palestinian "Islamic Jihad" group. That had been a direct result of a massive release of that organization's operatives from Palestinian prisons, along with members of "Hamas". The car bomb attack was but one of a series of incidents aimed at creating tension in the Jerusalem area. Those incidents had been instigated by the Palestinian authority or by its activities, which had forced Israel to respond, with restraint, by attacking the empty offices of the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus. Unfortunately, the military escalation by the Palestinian side had transformed what it called the intifada into a limited war.

77. Despite those attacks, Israel was acting with the utmost restraint. For example, in all the helicopter attacks the Israeli forces tried to avoid fatalities and issued early warnings. Israel's response had been measured, proportionate and cautious.

78. In Israel's opinion, Chairman Arafat was not exerting all his power to stop the violence. He was thus not only violating his agreement with Minister Peres; he was also giving a "green light" to continue along the same path. For example, members of the Tanzim had openly declared that they did not intend to halt the violence. The situation had undoubtedly been enflamed by recent declarations by Chairman Arafat, for instance, that the intifada would continue until the liberation of Jerusalem. The Chairman was using false claims about Israel's actions which he expressed to his public and to the world as a part of his strategy. Israel abided by all its commitments. If the international community stood idly by as the Palestinians continued to violate prior agreements, then the Palestinians could only construe that as encouragement to commit more violence.

79. Despite all the disturbances, Israel had continually provided for supplies of food and humanitarian aid. The Government of Israel had issued clear orders not to touch public utilities. Clearly, in a time of violence some local incidents might occur, but Israel was committed to dealing with them immediately. Israel took all necessary measures to prevent any damage to Islamic religious sites. At the same time, Israel expected the Palestinian Authority to adopt a similar approach to Jewish religious sites.

80. The parties currently found themselves at a crossroads. They could resume negotiations, which, based on the ideas discussed at Camp David, would lead to the creation of a viable Palestinian State. The other route was that of violence and unilateral Palestinian action, which was most likely to lead to the creation of a source of continuous instability in the region capable of threatening moderate neighbouring countries, regional stability and global interests. Israel had been ready to do whatever was needed to resume negotiations. Regrettably, Chairman Arafat was by all appearances choosing the unilateral route, coupled with violence. In that case Israel would be forced to take measures to defend its own interests.

81. It was incumbent upon the international community to indicate to Chairman Arafat the cost of his deeds and to point out to him that the only possible route was that which led to an honourable and agreed birth of a Palestinian State. The role of the international community should go beyond responding to the current situation and should include dealing with the basic causes of the crisis. Israel called on the international community to secure from Chairman Arafat an official statement regarding his commitments and an undertaking to refrain from unilateral actions.

82. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, noted with regret that the representative of Israel, on the pretext of exercising his right of reply, had instead made a statement to the Committee. Once again the Committee had been forced to listen to Israeli fabrications concerning the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. Accusations that the Palestinian leadership had supposedly "instigated" the current situation did not correspond to reality and had been made in order to divert attention from the clear role of Israel in provoking the situation and fanning its flames by disproportionate use of force against the civilian Palestinian population. The

attempts of the representative of Israel to have everyone believe that Israel's current actions were directed at the restoration of peace and order were laughable. The Palestinian delegation considered that the use of live ammunition against the civilian population, leading to daily loss of life, was hardly conducive to the restoration of peace and order.

Organization of work

83. The Chairman drew the Committee's attention to draft resolutions A/C.4/55/L.10-L.16 on agenda item 84, and draft resolutions A/C.4/55/L.17-L.21 on agenda item 85. Interested delegations had requested a postponement of decisions on those draft resolutions. With the Committee's agreement, he suggested that the request should be granted.

84. *It was so decided.*

85. **Mr. Zaki** (Egypt) recalled that two days of meetings had been allocated for agenda item 86 (Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects). Under the new agreement governing relations between the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations and the General Assembly, consideration of the agenda item would begin with the report of the Under-Secretary-General and be followed by the general debate. The word "followed" should not be taken to mean that the general debate had to begin immediately after the report, at the same meeting.

Agenda item 83: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)
(A/C.4/55/L.8/Rev.1 and L.9/Rev.1)

86. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to the draft resolution on the agenda item (A/C.4/55/L.8/Rev.1) and the statement on its programme budget implications (A/C.4/55/L.9/Rev.1).

87. *Draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.8/Rev.1 was adopted.*

88. **The Chairman** announced that the Committee had thus completed its consideration of the agenda item.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.